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## **Decision Memorandum** ***South Fork Spruce Creek*** ***Culvert Replacement Project***



**USDA Forest Service, Northern Region**  
**Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests**  
**Lochsa-Powell Ranger District**  
**Idaho County, Idaho**

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### **I. Background**

The Lochsa-Powell District Ranger proposes to replace the existing undersized culvert at the mouth of the South Fork of Spruce Creek. The project is located in the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests, Idaho County, Idaho at Township 38 North, Range 16 East, Section 25, Boise Meridian. (See attached map.)

### **II. Purpose and Need**

The undersized pipe arch culvert at South Fork Spruce Creek on Road 373 currently accommodates most high flow events but, due to high velocities and a lack of substrate in the culvert, the culvert acts as a barrier to aquatic organisms including Snake River steelhead and Spring/Summer Chinook.

The proposed action is needed to provide an appropriate-sized culvert to allow aquatic organism passage upstream and downstream of the site. Replacing the culvert will provide access to over eight miles of upstream habitat. In addition, the bottomless (arch or bridge) structure will meet Forest Plan standards for passage of 100-year flow events and will pass wood and other items moving in the stream.

The Forest Service has an easement from Western Pacific Timber which grants the Forest Service the ability to perform the culvert replacement, including the right to temporarily use private lands immediately adjacent to the right-of-way for the planned work. The Forest Service will coordinate the replacement timing with Western Pacific Timber, the private land owner.

### **Decision**

I have decided to approve the South Fork Spruce Creek Culvert Replacement project with the following terms and conditions.

The project, a partnership project with the Nez Perce Tribe and Bonneville Power Administration, will remove an existing undersized pipe arch at milepost 13.2 of Forest Service Road 373 and replace it with a bottomless structure (an arch with concrete footing or a bridge). The work will be done under a Forest Service contract. Access to the project site is via Highway 12 and Forest Service Road 373 from Lolo Pass. FS Road 373 will be temporarily closed to public use during implementation.

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The work includes but is not limited to clearing and grubbing, erosion control measures, structure excavation, roadway embankment, removing and disposing existing culverts, compaction, riprap, roadway surfacing, furnishing and installing concrete foundations, furnishing and erecting a structural-plate arch culvert or bridge, and all other incidental items necessary to complete the project. Heavy equipment used for the project included excavators, bull dozers and road graders. Ground disturbance will result from excavation in the vicinity of the stream crossing.

Permits for disturbance of water or wetlands would be obtained prior to initiating work (Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit, Idaho Department of Water Resources Stream Alteration Permit).

The project will be completed in 2018. The work will occur during low summer flows (July through September) as designated through consultation with Fish and Wildlife regulatory agencies. The project will take up to six weeks to complete.

### ***Design Criteria***

The following Design Criteria are not all-inclusive, as Forest Plan standards are incorporated by reference:

- All Best Management Practices (BMP) for culvert replacements will be implemented including those for invasive plant management (equipment cleaning and inspection, use of weed-seed free straw, etc.), and water quality, which include erosion control measures, a stream dewatering and re-watering plan, fish salvage, washing of stream substrate prior to re-watering, and turbidity monitoring, if required.
- Mechanical support will follow BMPs for fuel storage and machine fueling to minimize the risk of a fuels spill into live water. The contractor will have fuel spill containment supplies onsite in the event of a fuel spill and their employees would be trained in the proper application and use of those materials.
- Salvaging and replanting of existing shrubs/forbs at site will be required.

### **III. Rationale for Decision and Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Decision**

#### **A. Category of Exclusion and Rationale for Using the Category**

Based on information in this document and the project record, I have determined that no extraordinary circumstances affecting resource conditions exist (36 CFR 220.6), that this project may be categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS, and that it meets all the criteria outlined for 36 CFR 220.6(e) (18) *Restoring wetlands, streams, riparian bodies by removing, replacing, or modifying water control structures such as, but not limited to, dams, levees, dikes, ditches, culverts, pipes, drainage tiles, valves, gates, and fencing, to allow waters to flow into natural channels and floodplains and restore natural flow regimes to the extent practicable where valid existing rights or special use authorizations are not unilaterally altered or canceled.*

The rationale for my decision is based on: (1) the proposed action fully meeting the criteria for Categorical Exclusions, (2) the proposed action meeting the purpose and need, (3) the findings related to extraordinary circumstances, discussed below, (4) the project's consistency with laws and regulations, including the Forest Plan, and (5) my review of the project record.

**B. Finding of the Absence of Significant Adverse Effects to Extraordinary Circumstances**

Based on the findings for resource conditions described below, I have determined that no extraordinary circumstances are associated with my decision. Forest Service direction at 36 CFR 220.6(b) describes the resource conditions that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstance related to the proposed action warrant further analysis and documentation in an EIS or EA.

Additionally, 36 CFR 220.6(b) states, "The mere presence of one of more of these resource conditions does not preclude use of a categorical exclusion. It is the existence of a cause-effect relationship between a proposed action and the potential effect on these resource conditions and if such a relationship exists, the degree of the potential effect of a proposed action on these resource conditions that determines whether extraordinary circumstances exist."

**1. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species.**

The Forest Interdisciplinary (ID) Team Wildlife Biologist, Fisheries Biologist and Botanist have determined the project would have no significant effects to federally listed and R1 Sensitive wildlife, fish and plant species and/or their habitats. Therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified for these resources.

**2. Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds.**

The Forest Hydrologist determined no significant effects to floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds are expected for this project. The project is consistent with all applicable State and Federal water quality laws, and with soil and water standards in the Clearwater National Forest Plan, including the PACFISH amendment. Based on this analysis, no extraordinary circumstances were identified regarding floodplains, wetlands, and municipal watersheds.

**3. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas or national recreation areas.**

The project area is not located in any congressionally designated area, and therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified to these resources.

**4. Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas.**

The project is not located within any Roadless Areas, Idaho Roadless Areas, or potential wilderness areas, and therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified to these resources.

**5. Research Natural Areas.**

The project area is not located in any research natural area, and therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified to this resource.

**6. American Indians and Alaska native religious or cultural sites.**

Because of previous adequate inventory; or the type, location or nature of the undertaking – the Forest Cultural Resource Specialist has determined the above project has little likelihood to adversely affect historic properties. As a result, a *No Inventory Decision* has been made, and no extraordinary circumstances identified to these resources.

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**7. Archaeological sites, or historical properties or areas.**

The Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer, or the Forest Archaeologist via the use of the North Idaho Programmatic Agreement, has determined that no archaeological or historic property will be adversely affected by this project. Therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified to these resources.

**IV. Interested and Affected Agencies, Organizations, and Persons Contacted**

On September 29, 2017, letters providing information and seeking public comment were mailed to individuals, organizations, a variety of state and local agencies, and the Nez Perce Tribe. Additionally, project information was also available at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/nezperce> under NEPA projects. Two responses were received during the scoping period, and their comments are addressed in Appendix A. The original letters are available in the project record.

**V. Findings Required by Other Laws**

Based on my review of the actions associated with this project, I find that the South Fork Spruce Creek Culvert Replacement Project is consistent with applicable Federal, state and local laws and regulations, including the standards and guidelines contained in the 1987 Clearwater National Forest Plan, as amended, as required by the National Forest Management Act of 1976.

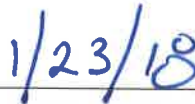
**VI. Contact Person**

Questions regarding this decision should be sent to Jeff Chynoweth, Small NEPA Planner, c/o Nez Perce-Clearwater NFs Supervisor's Office, 903 Third Street, Kamiah, Idaho 83536; 208-935-4260 or FAX 208-935-4275.

**VII. Signature of Deciding Officer**



BRANDON KNAPTON  
District Ranger  
Lochsa-Powell Ranger District



Date

cc: Annie Connor

Enclosure: Map

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**Map of South Fork Spruce Creek Culvert Replacement Project**

